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An Anti-US Fever Rises in Manila

Angry Demonstrations Heat the Air Before
Opening of Talks on US Bases This Week,
Although Many Filipinos Want Americans
to Stay; Chinese Agitation Suspected

By DENNIS BLOODWORTH, Observer News Service

SINGAPORE, Malaysia—Manila is in the grip of an anti-American fever that may reach its climax early in February when talks on the future status of United States bases in the Philippines will be resumed. For although Washington seems to be up against genuine nationalistic resentment directed against the extraterritorial rights enjoyed by American military personnel in the young republic, there are hints of foreign incitement behind it.

Agitation began in earnest last month after an American airman had killed a 14 year old Filipino boy he caught scavenging for scrap metal at Clark air base, nerve center of the United States 13th air force 50 miles north of Manila, and a fisherman was shot by an American guard a fortnight later.

Burned Uncle Sam

Tempers were further inflamed when a report that two Filipinos had tried to throw a live mortar bomb into a children's school on Clark base was ascribed to United States Ambassador William McCormick Blair, and at once denounced by the police as a "crude" attempt to make Americans appear more sinned against than sinning.

Last week, thousands of torch bearing demonstrators burned an effigy of Uncle Sam outside the United States embassy in Manila, after marching through the streets bearing 32 cardboard coffins symbolizing the alleged victims of American shootings during the last two years. They also carried hundreds of placards with such slogans as: "Go Home, Yankee Dogs," "Go Home, White Monkeys," "Down With American Murderers."

This hateful manifestation followed a series of protests in which Filipino crowds had demanded the recall of Blair and the abrogation of all mili-

tary treaties. President Macapagal has ordered an inquiry, and the Philippine congress has recommended the "revision" of the 1947 agreement under which the United States holds a 99 year lease on Clark field, the naval base at Subic bay and other military installations. In mid-January Antonio Villegas, mayor of Manila, publicly advocated putting the bases under joint Filipino-American administration.

The highly susceptible Filipinos, frequently stung by the suspicion that many fellow Asians look upon them contemptuously as cut price Americans, are never slow to assert their national dignity. Nevertheless, when Liberal party leaders declared that the opposition Nacionalistas wanted to take the bases out of American hands completely, the Nacionalistas rose in indignation to nail "this vicious distortion."

Many Favor US

Presidential elections will be held in November, and the chiefs of each party hope the other will commit itself mistakenly to an anti-American policy. For the solid section of the otherwise volatile Philippine electorate—notably in the villages—has a genuine regard for Americans, and many voters point out that United States bases not only bring money and protection, but enable the Filipinos to keep their own armed forces down to a modest 45,000 men.

Political loudmouths and men of

sense alike are therefore quick to stress that they only want to abolish the "irritants," notably the "one sided and obsolete" freedom from local jurisdiction granted to American base personnel.

Next Thursday, Foreign Secretary Mauro Mendez will reopen negotiations with Ambassador Blair on precisely this subject, following earlier discussions this month which both sides called "fruitful."

Yet despite this promise of satisfaction the stinging spindrift of a peculiarly vicious agitation continues to blow, and since it cannot be fully explained by any ground swell of legitimate Filipino grievance beneath, many commentators believe it to be moved by alien winds above.

"Shoot a Filipino for 787 Dollars," sneered one Manila headline after the United States authorities had compensated the relatives of a boy killed at Clark base.

'US Blackmail'

Ferdinand Marcos, the Nacionalista presidential candidate, has promised he will end Philippine "puppetry toward rich aliens," and a leading congressman has declared the bases enable the United States to "blackmail the Philippines into political subjugation" and make the republic depend on foreign defenses which could not in fact stop a Chinese or Soviet assault.

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Jeer leaders in Manila castigate every American institution from the embassy to the Asian Foundation for allegedly "manipulating" Philippine government agencies. And beneath this is a venomous whispering campaign to smear as "CIA agents" and would-be colonialists even those American residents who have proved steadfast friends.

Pro-American Filipinos do not escape. "How's the little brown American today?" softly asks one columnist of another in the National Press club. Is he simply recoiling from the idea that he himself may be a little brown American, or is someone else calling this ugly little tune?

Filipino journalists have vigorously denied allegations published by an American news magazine that there is Indonesian money behind the steep anti-American slant in their press.

Some Manila columnists are doubtless of the highest professional integrity, but in a sadly suspicious world these protestations carry less weight than perhaps might seem fair. Indeed, Filipino newspapermen and politicians spend much of their time themselves charging one another with corruption.

Anti-Malaysia Articles

Meanwhile, to Indonesia and Communist China—the "new emerging forces" that both claim to be "encircled by the imperialists"—the American bases in the Philippines are as obnoxious as the British bases in Singapore. At least in theory they are first priority targets for "the just indignation of the masses" if only that indignation can be unostentatiously financed.

Left wing foreign influence is still limited and difficult to assess. But during the past few months certain Manila columnists have published almost hysterical articles blackguarding Malaysia for defending herself against Indonesian aggression.

Certainly these are only straws in the wind—but they are the stuff that bricks are made of.

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